



# PEBP Publishes Its First Newsletter...

## And Makes Program Changes Based on Your Feedback

Last September, PEBP staff conducted 15 focus groups throughout the state including: Reno, Las Vegas, Carson City, Ely and Elko. Over 300 plan participants from various state and non-state agencies were invited to provide their input. The purpose was to gather feedback from active and retired participants on what they liked about PEBP's plans, what benefits they would like to see improved and whether PEBP's communications met their needs. Approximately 90 participants voiced their opinions.

Although we received detailed information from those who attended, we wanted to make sure the issues we heard represented the beliefs of our 33,000 participants. So, in October, we distributed an electronic survey to over 12,000 participants with 4,500 participants responding (see page 2, *Recommendations to the PEBP Board*).

## Feedback Leads to Improved PEBP Services

Your feedback has been extremely valuable in helping PEBP focus its efforts on the areas most important to you. Here are the changes you can expect in 2005.

**New logo.** Many participants confuse Public Employees' Benefits Program (PEBP) with the Public Employees' Retirement System of Nevada (PERS), which handles your retirement benefits. PEBP administers your medical, prescription drug, vision, dental, life insurance, long-term disability and other voluntary healthcare programs.

To help distinguish ourselves and make it easier for you to identify information from us, we have developed a new logo and slogan, "Health Matters." Thank you to all of the participants who provided feedback on this important branding effort. Soon you will notice the new logo and slogan on all of our materials.

**Newsletter.** You indicated you would like a quarterly newsletter sent to your home to learn about any changes to the plan, PEBP and Board activities, and health-related issues. The next issue is scheduled for the spring.

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**Web site.** We also heard the PEBP website ([www.pebp.state.nv.us](http://www.pebp.state.nv.us)) is one of the first places you go to get information. However, it isn't always easy to find what you are looking for quickly.

Last November we started working on redesigning the site. Not only will the site look different, you will find practical information about choosing a plan, locating a provider and preparing for retirement. We anticipate launching the new site in mid-January in an organized and easy-to-use format.

**Retirement Benefits Orientation.** We are pleased to announce we are expanding our benefits orientation to help you prepare for retirement as a "new retiree." Many of you said you would like more information about what you need to know about your benefits as you get ready to retire.

Starting this spring, PEBP will launch a retirement benefits orientation for those planning to retire within one year. More details will be announced in the Spring newsletter.

Thank you **Gary Lee Johnson, Dave Morgan and Amanda Thurber** for  
submitting the winning slogan — **Health Matters.**

## Recommendations to the PEBP Board

### Feedback From Participants

Participants of the survey and focus groups were very specific about what benefit features were important to them. Overall, participants believe PEBP's benefits are competitive when compared to other employers and that they generally meet their needs (see page 1, *Feedback Leads to Improved PEBP Services*).

However, retirees were particularly concerned about coordination of benefits with Medicare. Some were unsure how benefits were paid or what services were covered. Retirees also stated they would like to learn about the benefits and limits of a Medigap plan before PEBP considers offering one.

Active participants expressed concern about the ability to afford medical, vision and dental coverage for their dependents and keeping healthcare costs reasonable.

When asked what benefits participants would like improved, active and retiree participants ranked the following as the top four most important features (in order of priority):

- Lower medical deductible
- Expand drug formulary
- Expand vision benefits
- Expand dental benefits

PEBP staff, plan actuaries and consultants reviewed each suggestion to determine if the plan design changes were financially possible. After several weeks of research, the PEBP staff provided recommendations to the Board at the November Board meeting.

The PEBP Board approved the recommendations and sent them to the Governor's office for the budgeting process. The Board will make final decisions about the recommendations by April 2005. Any plan changes will take effect July 1, 2005.

## Getting Your Retiree Health Care Subsidy

### Have you turned in your Years of Service Certification Form?

If you are retired or planning on retiring soon, you need to make sure you turn in your Years of Service Certification form to the PEBP office. If not, you risk missing out on a subsidy that will help offset the cost of your retiree health insurance. If you have already submitted a form, you do not need to submit another one.

In 2003, the State Legislature approved two bills regarding subsidies for retiree health care. The first, effective October 1, 2003, required non-state employers to provide their retirees – who participate in PEBP – with a subsidy, just as the State provides to its retirees. The second, effective July 1, 2004, clarified that employers are only responsible for subsidizing an employee's years of service with the organization. Prior to July 1, the retiree's last employer provided a subsidy for all of the years of service no matter where those years were acquired. To determine your years of service credit, a Years of Service Certification Form must be completed.

### Enacting the new legislation

According to PEBP regulations, a retiree will not receive a subsidy until PEBP receives the Years of Service Form. A grace period for submitting these forms has been in place since July. However, the grace period expires February 28, 2005.

**If you are a retired PEBP plan participant or are planning to retire before February 28, 2005 and have not completed a Years of Service Certification Form**, you have until February 28 to submit one and receive a subsidy dating back to the day your retiree coverage began or July 1, 2004, whichever is later. Even for participants who plan to retire on February 28, your form must be submitted by 3 p.m. on February 28

in order to have your coverage subsidized in March.

**If you retire on or after March 1, 2005**, your subsidy will begin the first of the month following PEBP's receipt of your Years of Service Certification Form. For example, if you retire on March 15 and the form is received on April 1, your subsidy will begin on May 1. That means you will be responsible for the full cost of coverage in April. As you can see, it makes sense to turn in your Years of Service Certification Form at least a month before your retiree coverage begins.

### Where to get a form

If you have questions about transitioning from an active employee to a retiree or would like to request a Years of Service Certification Form, contact PEBP's Member Services at 775-684-7000 or 800-326-5496. Forms will also be included in the Retirement Benefit Orientation packet (which will be available in early March).

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## Retirees – The subsidy grace period is ending

**Retirees who do not submit a Years of Service Certification Form by Feb. 28, 2005 will not be eligible for a retroactive subsidy.**

**As of March 1, 2005, all retiree premium subsidies will be applied on the 1st of the month following receipt of the form.**

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## Straight from PEBP

### Woody Thorne, PEBP's Executive Officer

In each newsletter, Straight from PEBP will introduce a member of the Board or Staff to talk about issues, activities or changes at PEBP and the impact they have on participants.



**Position.** Woody Thorne, Executive Officer

**Role.** As Executive Officer, I report directly to the Board. I oversee the daily operations, manage

the PEBP Staff, identify plan issues and provide recommendations to the Board.

I am also the primary communications link between the Board and outside entities, including the Governor and Legislature.

### What You Should Know

#### Looking Back At Plan Changes

Three years ago, rising health care costs, plan management issues and significant claims put stress on the PEBP benefits plan. This caused PEBP's financial resources to diminish more quickly than anticipated. To improve the plan's financial outlook, PEBP had to make some tough decisions. During the last three years, the plan year was changed to coordinate with the fiscal year; benefit coverage was reduced;

and, a new prescription drug manager and claims administrator were introduced.

#### How Far We Have Come

Today, the plan is financially healthy. The plan's financial resources (called reserves) have reached appropriate levels in response to plan changes, significantly lower claims costs, and the Governor's and the Legislature's approval to increase the subsidy for state employees and retirees. We also have better access to the information and data we need to manage the plan more efficiently.

#### Planning for Tomorrow

Now that the plan is financially stable, the PEBP Board is focused on improving member satisfaction and operational excellence. To identify areas of improvement, we asked for participant input. We conducted focus groups and distributed surveys this past fall (see page 1). After collecting and assessing your suggestions, the PEBP staff took those plan change recommendations to the Board.

In November, the Board approved the recommendations and submitted them to the Governor's office to be included in the proposed budget (see page 2, *Recommendations to the Board*).

### What's Next

When the Governor and Legislature approve the budget, we will know what plan changes have been funded. A final decision is anticipated in the late spring of 2005. At that time, we will communicate any changes in the Spring 2005 newsletter and in your open enrollment materials in May.

PEBP participants provide feedback

Oct. 2004

Recommendations presented to the Board

Nov. 2004

Governor determines the recommendations to be included in budget

Jan. 2005

Legislature approves budget

Feb. – April 2005

PEBP notifies participants

Spring 2005 newsletter

May 2005 open enrollment

Approval Process

## At Your Fingertips

### Upcoming PEBP Board Meetings

February 3, 2005

March 10, 2005

April 7, 2005

For meeting times and locations visit:  
[www.pebp.state.nv.us](http://www.pebp.state.nv.us)

Medical Coverage	Company	Phone	Web Site
<b>PPO</b>			
<b>Claims</b>	Benefit Planners	877-963-8232	<a href="http://www.benplan.com">www.benplan.com</a>
<b>In-State Network</b>	PEBP Statewide PPO	800-336-0123	<a href="http://www.pebpstatewideppo.com">www.pebpstatewideppo.com</a>
<b>Out-of-State Network</b>	Beech Street	800-432-1776	<a href="http://www.beechstreet.com">www.beechstreet.com</a>
<b>Pharmacy</b>	CatalystRx	800-799-1012	<a href="http://www.catalystrx.com">www.catalystrx.com</a> ID: nevada Password: benefit
<b>HMO</b>			
<b>Northern NV</b>	Anthem HMO Nevada	866-746-0893	<a href="http://www.anthem.com">www.anthem.com</a> HMO, POS BlueAdvantage Plan
<b>Southern NV</b>	Health Plan of Nevada	702-242-7300 800-777-1840	<a href="http://stateofnv.healthplanofnevada.com">stateofnv.healthplanofnevada.com</a>
<b>Medicare Eligible</b>	Senior Dimensions	702-242-7301 800-650-6232	<a href="http://stateofnv.healthplanofnevada.com">stateofnv.healthplanofnevada.com</a>

*We're in it together*



## Health Tips

### What you eat can affect your general health

Pizza, bagels and coffee may have sustained you in the past, but as you age, proper nutrition plays a larger role in your health. Not only does your body metabolize foods differently, your body's nutritional needs change over time. Consider that approximately four out of five adults have increased chances for chronic diseases such as heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and osteoporosis because of their diets. According to experts, not only can you fend off these diseases, a balanced diet can help fight disease and infection.

The definition of a balanced diet can change over time. As we age, our bodies need fewer calories because our metabolisms slow down, even if we maintain a physically active lifestyle. You can lose as much as 20 to 30 percent of lean body mass over your lifespan. Consider this:

**At age 30.** Blood flow to the kidneys, brain and liver start to decrease. The body also stops generating bone mass and begins losing it.

Make sure to drink at least eight glasses of water and increase calcium rich foods in your diet and stay away from foods that leach bones of their calcium such as diet sodas, caffeine, and chocolate.

**At age 40.** Your metabolism drops four to five percent. The cardiovascular system also becomes less efficient with age and arteries become less flexible.

Reduce the number of calories you eat. Aim to eat high fiber foods such as oatmeal, fruit, vegetables, brown rice and whole grain bread at every meal to help with digestion.

**At age 50.** The level of HDL (good cholesterol) starts to diminish, subtle memory loss may become apparent and the ability to metabolize sugar decreases.

Eat foods rich in nutrients such as vitamin E, lecithin, and B vitamins to help lessen the effects of memory loss. Use the nutrition facts label to help you choose foods lower in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol.

**At age 60.** Blood flow through the kidneys reduces further, while the sensation of thirst starts decreasing.

Drink when you are not thirsty. Limit fatty foods and choose healthy cooking methods such as grilling, steaming or baking instead of frying. Trim fat off your meat and remove skin from chicken.

**At age 70.** Taste sensation changes making it more difficult to taste salt and sweet, and better able to taste bitter and sour. Use extra herbs and spices to flavor foods, but limit the amount of sodium you use.

**Get more information about healthy eating by visiting:**

**Mayo Clinic**  
"Food & Nutrition Center"  
[www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com)

**AARP**  
[www.aarp.org/health-eating/](http://www.aarp.org/health-eating/)

**U.S. Department of Agriculture**  
[www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/](http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/)

**If you have topics you would like to learn more about, please send your suggestions to:**  
[healthtips@peb.state.nv.us](mailto:healthtips@peb.state.nv.us)